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SOCIETY FOR THE ENTERTAINMENT OF SHUT-INS  
ORGANIZED 1901

Founded by Rev. George W. Shinn, D.D.

Boston, 1909

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## Society for the Entertainment of Shut=Ins

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NEW opportunities for service, new helpers and new lines of work developed are the features of the past year's record of this Society. Formed in the first week of the twentieth century, it has gone its way quietly until it has won a distinctive place, even in Boston, the city of many philanthropies. Its mission is to "those whom the Lord hath shut in," and more especially to those whose horizon has become narrowed to four walls. By means of visits, letters, reading matter, and other attentions, it seeks to entertain and cheer. It is what both organized charity workers and their emotional critics agree is the best form of philanthropy, personal friendliness for individuals. It is not alone those who are poor in this world's goods who need friends but anyone who is bankrupt in health and feels the burden of enforced idleness. The Society has never recognized any differences of class or creed where there is a demand for its ministrations. Very often those who have long been ill find their circle of friends growing steadily narrower because in their seclusion there are no oppor-

tunities for making new acquaintances to fill the places of those that go away. Such are glad of new friends even though they lack no material comfort and through the Society it has been possible to give many of these a wider outlook and an opportunity to be of service to others which is in itself a boon.

**Where  
Help  
Is  
Needed**

On the other hand, where physical suffering is intensified by the want of material comforts it has been possible to do much to relieve the necessities, usually by enlisting the interest of other societies or individuals. Always the Society works in harmony with existing organizations in the church or town or both, seeking only to fill places not already occupied. In numerous instances it has been able to do much to relieve both the invalids and their attendants which are often equally desirable. In some cases this has meant keeping the caretaker from complete breakdown, the result of which would have been most disastrous.

There are also times when straitened circumstances draw an inflexible line between necessities and luxuries, but where ordinary charity would be spurned, although a little help from friends is often most gratefully received.

It is, however, in the subtler forms of cheer, in the building up of hope and courage, in finding new interests or reviving old ones, in bringing good books or new ideas, in carrying "golden gossip" to those who have drifted into an



eddy of petty interests, in giving comfort at times of especial suffering or grief, that the Society does its best work. If it were possible, without violating confidences, to tell some of the most interesting details of our work, there would be no lack of support, but in seeking to show friendliness the obligations of friendship must not be forgotten.

While the number of formal entertainments, which were characteristic of the early years of the Society, has been smaller, there has been a marked increase in the number of visits made both by volunteers and by those who receive some remuneration. More than ever before the value of the service rendered has been recognized by other organizations and by the public. More appeals for visits or other forms of cheer have been made and the benefits accruing have been more generally appreciated. More books for the library, more literature and gifts for distribution have been received and more volunteer visitors and correspondents have given their services.

Unfortunately the means for increasing the work have not kept pace with the opportunities. The volunteer visitors have been most helpful, but where frequent calls are really necessary and in certain cases the reliance must be upon the regular visitors. The incidental expenses have also increased. When it is understood that nearly seven hundred Shut-Ins received some remembrance at Christmas time and

that Easter, birthdays, and Valentine's Day are remembered to an aggregate of many hundreds, that many bundles and boxes of magazines and books are sent to hospitals as well as to the isolated Shut-Ins, it will be seen that the bills for postage and express are very heavy although the visitors have personally distributed both gifts and literature to a great extent.

**Com-  
forts  
and  
Conven-  
iences**

The Society now owns one lifter, one bed table and two wheel chairs and has the use of another. All of them are in use and others could be. Sometimes a screen would supply the privacy now wholly lacking and in many cases it would give great comfort. Back rests, cushions, hot water bottles as well as dressing gowns, sweaters, etc., are frequently needed but with the very limited income of the Society, it is impossible to expend it for these since they are not strictly for entertainment. Some money has been given for such purposes and more could be used although partly used articles will be quite acceptable. If people who have such articles to spare would notify the secretary she would tell where they could be put to good use.

Many invalids would be glad to dispose of their handiwork and orders for needle work of all kinds, paper flowers, painting, etc., can be filled. It would be a great help if some of the members of the society would undertake a sale of this work, thus helping the Shut-Ins to help themselves.

A proof of the appreciation of the work by the beneficiaries is shown when they send to the visitors or the secretary in case of unusual need. More than once when there has been illness or death the visitor has been one of the first called upon to comfort and sustain. When one long time sufferer passed away, his daughter, herself confined to a chair for many years, asked the visitor to sing at the services, because she had been such a comfort to him while alive. They learn to depend upon the visitors in emergencies and ask for advice on many subjects. The following bits from letters received tell something of the feeling.

“ I’ve been an invalid for thirty years and this is the happiest Christmas I’ve ever spent. Somehow I did not feel so lonely and away from everything when I received so many remembrances from people in the (Shut-In) Society. And to think I never knew there was such a Society for just such as I.”

**What  
the  
Shut-Ins  
Say**

“ If you receive a moiety of the blessings invoked upon you by ——— when I called there today you will surely be well provided. He could not say enough about your kindness.”

“ When I called on ——— today she tried to express her thanks for the “wonder box,” but her eyes filled and her voice choked so she could not speak. She seemed to be overwhelmed by the kindness she has received through you.”

“ Through your kindness in sending Mrs. ——— many lonely moments for our dear mother were cheered and brightened. She loved her very dearly. I want you to know and feel that we appreciate it all very, very much.”

“ The winter did not seem so long when there was a drawing from the wonder bag to look forward to. And every ‘ wonder ’ seemed especially fitted.”

“ I saved all the rhymes that were in the wonder bag parcels and read them over and recall the pleasure.”

Several sufferers from serious heart trouble, a number growing gradually more helpless with arthritis, one patient sufferer in the advanced stages of locomotor ataxia, and another with palsy are among those who receive much attention.

**Some  
Things  
We Do**

A helpless invalid who lies alone all day in a cheerless tenement because she and the sister who supports her cannot bear to be separated, has had much brightness brought into her singularly desolate life, and is exceedingly grateful.

There are a number of tuberculosis patients who are receiving cheer and help in their battle for life, and also many blind persons, especially those otherwise disabled. For the most part both these classes receive attention from other organizations.

**What  
We  
Need**

At present the chief need is money. With the most careful expenditure the work calls for double what was



received last year, so great has been the increase of calls during the past few months. The sum of one dollar or more constitutes a Contributing Member. Would you not like to have a share in this beneficence?

1. Money to pay the visitors and general expenses of the Society.

2. Volunteers to visit or to send letters, reading matter or post cards regularly.

3. Wonder bags. These should contain a number of small gifts, wrapped separately, each with a long string attached coming out of the mouth of the bag, drawings to be made daily, tri- or semi-weekly, for a number of weeks. Articles suitable for invalids—stationery, postage, toilet articles, books or booklets, neckwear, handkerchiefs, bed or house shoes, notions, sewing or fancy work tools or materials, etc., etc. The filling of one or more of these may be done by circles of King's Daughters, church societies, clubs, etc.

4. Articles for distribution, especially Christmas and Easter gifts, new or old (in good condition). It will be especially helpful if the gifts for Christmas and other special seasons are sent considerably in advance in order that they may be properly assigned.

The Secretary would also be glad to give names to whom gifts could be sent directly as well as of those who

desire reading matter, correspondence, etc.

The Secretary will be glad to furnish further information, and she or the visitors will talk on the details of the work before organizations wishing to help in any way.

PRESIDENT, REV. JOHN MCGAW FOSTER,  
VICE-PRESIDENT, REV. JOHN HOPKINS DENISON,  
SECRETARY, MRS. F. B. TRACY,  
16 Mystic Ave., Winchester, Tel. Con.  
TREASURER, MR. F. F. McLEOD,  
National Shawmut Bank, 40 Water St., Boston.

**The  
Shut-In  
Society**

This Society is closely affiliated with the Shut-In Society, which publishes the "Open Window," a monthly magazine which serves as a means of communication between its members who are scattered throughout the world although chiefly in the United States. Arrangements have been made by which any of the Shut-Ins in this vicinity may join the Society and receive the magazine and other benefits. The annual fee is only twenty-five cents for invalids. For those who wish to become associate or subscribing members, a yearly fee of one dollar is charged, which covers the subscription to the Open Window. Subscriptions may be sent through the Secretary or direct to Miss Mary H. Hadley, No. 355 Willow Street, New Haven, Conn.



